



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Program Solicitation

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program

National Institute of
Food and Agriculture

Fiscal Year 2012

Closing Date:

Regular Projects Deadline: February 9, 2012

Collaboration Letter of Intent: January 10, 2012 (New Proposals)

Collaboration Applications Deadline: March 8, 2012 (ALL)

HSI Program:

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Internet: <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/hispanic.html>

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:
10.223 Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program**

NIFA Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-HSI-003624

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE;
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS EDUCATION GRANTS PROGRAM

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.223, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program.

DATES: All **Regular Project** applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on **February 9, 2012** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). All **Collaboration Project** applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on March 8, 2012 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline normally will not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after this date will be considered to the extent practicable. *Letter of intent required for New Collaborations only are due January 10, 2012.*

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program. Such comments will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Comments should be submitted as provided for in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to promote and strengthen the ability of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to carry out higher education programs that attract, retain, and graduate outstanding students capable of enhancing the nation's food, agricultural, and natural resource scientific and professional work force. Proposed projects should strengthen the ability of HSIs to enhance their Hispanic-serving capacity and attract, retain, and increase the number of underrepresented students who graduate in food, agriculture, nutrition, and natural resources.

NIFA anticipates the total amount available for support of the HSI in FY 2012 will be approximately \$9.2 million.

This notice identifies the objectives for HSI projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a HSI grant.

NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

This program is administered under the provisions of section 1455 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3241) pursuant to section 815 of Public Law 104-127 and Public Law 110-246. Section 1455 of NARETPA, as reauthorized by section 7128 of Public Law 110-246, provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to make competitive grants to Hispanic-Serving Institutions for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the ability of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs.

According to Section 1404(9) of NARETPA as amended by Section 7101 of Public Law 110-246, the term "food and agricultural sciences" means basic, applied, and developmental teaching activities in food and fiber, agricultural, renewable energy and natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, or rural economic, community, or business development, including activities relating to the following: (1) Animal health, production, and well-being; (2) Plant health and production; (3) Animal and plant germ plasm collection and preservation; (4) Aquaculture; (5) Food safety; (6) Soil and water conservation and improvement; (7) Forestry, horticulture, and range management; (8) Nutritional sciences and promotion; (9) Farm enhancement, including financial management, input efficiency, and profitability; (10) Home economics; (11) Rural human ecology; (12) Youth development and agricultural education, including 4-H clubs; (13) Expansion of domestic and international markets for agricultural commodities and products, including agricultural trade barrier identification and analysis; (14) Information management and technology transfer related to agriculture; (15) Biotechnology related to agriculture; and (16) The processing, distributing, marketing, and utilization of food and agricultural products.

Per section 7128 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246), activities funded under this program are no longer required to benefit a consortia of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to be supported by the grant. Consequently, the definition of a "Regular Project" under the HSI Education Grants Program has been revised to a project where the applicant or applicant and one other Hispanic-Serving Institution will be involved in the execution of the project.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Purpose

The Department of Agriculture is designated as the lead Federal Agency that supports higher education in the food and agricultural sciences. In this context, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) has specific responsibility to initiate and support projects to strengthen higher education teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences.

The purpose of NIFA's Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program is to encourage innovative teaching or education proposals with potential to impact and become models for other institutions that serve Hispanics, at the regional or national level. While

research and extension activities may be included in a funded HSI Education project, the primary focus must be to improve teaching, enrollment, and graduation rates within a degree-granting program.

HSI Education projects should develop human capital relevant to overall program goals for U.S. agriculture. An education or teaching activity is formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters. For example, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

Priorities

In order to support the future workforce needs of the food and agriculture sector, the HSI Grants Program must align with NIFA priorities. NIFA has refocused its mission by directing agricultural sciences research, education, and extension programs to address the following five Priority Areas:

1. Global Food Security and Hunger;
2. Climate Change;
3. Sustainable Energy;
4. Childhood Obesity; and
5. Food Safety.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that include the following characteristics:

Focus: All HSI-funded projects should focus on improving the quality of academic instruction within the K-20 system in order to recruit and retain a greater number of qualified and diverse graduates who are either: (a) capable of entering the agricultural sciences workforce with occupational competencies expected by employers, or (b) encouraged to pursue an advanced degree in disciplines supporting the five NIFA Priority Areas. ‘Academic instruction’, as used in the previous sentence, includes improving curricula, faculty competencies, and interactions with other academic institutions or employers to increase student recruitment and retention levels in order to meet the demands of a changing U.S. agricultural sciences workforce.

Scale: All HSI-funded projects should seek to address a greater number of prospective students or qualified faculty and demonstrate the potential for adoption by other academic institutions to address similar challenges. Projects should also maximize available educational resources, encourage partnerships, and reduce duplication of efforts among participating academic institutions, especially in areas of faculty expertise, course offerings, and transfer or articulation agreements between institutions, all to enhance students’ interests and abilities to pursue advanced degrees.

Impact: All HSI-funded projects should seek to create measurable impacts. Impacts are defined as anticipated benefits for the target project audience. Measuring impacts begins with a comprehensive Project Evaluation Plan that includes developing

assessment instruments. The Project Evaluation Plan explained in Part I.C.8., provides further specific guidance on the importance of developing a compelling impact.

C. Program Description

All applications must include the essential components given below.

1. NIFA Priority Need.

The first section of the project description should define the NIFA Priority described above to be addressed in the project.

2. HSI Education Grants Program Goals.

Applicants must include a statement that shows how the proposed projects will advance the goals of the HSI Education Grants Program, which are:

- Increase the number of underrepresented groups to reflect the nation's population demographics and to attain post secondary and post graduate degrees in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences;
- Enhance the quality of postsecondary instruction within these disciplines;
- Facilitate the skill and competency development of Hispanic students in order to be competitive for jobs in the food and agriculture sector and at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other federal agencies;
- Provide opportunities and access to food and agricultural careers in the civil service; and
- Align the efforts of HSIs and other non-profit organizations in support of the academic development and career attainment of underrepresented groups.

3. HSI Education Grant Program Objectives.

In addition, grant applications must address how the proposed projects will be able to contribute to the goals above by aligning the projects to the following HSI Education Grants Program Objectives:

- a. Strengthen institutional educational capacities to develop and enhance curriculum, faculty, instruction delivery systems, and infrastructure including libraries and scientific instrumentation, in order to respond and serve the needs of Hispanics/Latinos in identified State, regional, national, or international educational needs in the food and agricultural sciences;
- b. Recruit, retain, and support underrepresented undergraduate and graduate students from HSIs, especially Hispanics, who are severely underrepresented in professional jobs related to food and agricultural sciences, in order to prepare them for careers related to the food, agricultural, and natural resource systems of the United States. Recruitment may start with mentoring high school students and continue by providing financial support for students from undergraduate through graduate level towards completion of doctoral degrees;

c. Facilitate cooperative initiatives between two or more Hispanic-Serving Institutions or between Hispanic-Serving Institutions and units of State government or the private sector such as non-profit organizations serving Hispanics, in order to maximize the development and use of resources and to improve the food and agricultural sciences teaching programs; and

d. Support the activities at institutions of Higher Education that strengthen the ability to serve as a role model on supporting Hispanic attainment by addressing the needs of this group and allowing the HSIs to enhance educational equity for underrepresented groups.

4. Educational Strategies

These are different educational strategies that HSI projects should focus on and develop in order to contribute to the HSI education program goals and objectives. If using more than one Educational Strategy in the application, please list, in the Project Summary, the most representative area first, (See Part IV, B.3a.). All these Educational Strategies present opportunities for USDA collaboration and involvement.

Projects addressing the HSI Program Objectives (Part I, C.3) or Educational Strategies below must demonstrate how proposed activities will provide more efficient and effective approaches than existing institutional programs in order to increase both the quality and quantity of targeted students.

Applicants should propose to improve mainstream instructional practices and address future needs within the food and agricultural sciences system. Applicants should consider projects that meet the various Educational Strategy: (a) reshape curricula for a changing agricultural system; (b) prepare faculty to teach a changing student clientele; (c) prepare instructional delivery systems; (d) acquire scientific instrumentation for teaching; (e) develop student experiential learning opportunities for underrepresented students; or (f) recruit and retain underrepresented students.

(a) Curricula Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources (including development of courses of study and degree programs).

The purpose of this strategy is to promote new and improved curricula, materials, and library resources to increase the quality of and continuously renew the academic programs of HSIs in the food, natural resources, and agricultural sciences. The overall objective is to stimulate the development and facilitate the use of exemplary education models and materials that incorporate the most recent advances in subject matter, research on teaching and learning theory, and instructional technology and to demonstrate the benefit of new technologies. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: the development of courses of study, degree programs, and instructional materials; the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects; the introduction of new subjects or new applications of knowledge pertaining to the food and agricultural sciences; or the acquisition of books and journals relating to the food and agricultural sciences.

(b) Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching.

The purpose of this strategy is to advance faculty development in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: obtaining experience with recent developments and new applications in a field; expanding competence in innovative technologies and new methods of instruction delivery or student advising skills; or pursuing further graduate-level study in a field related to the food and agricultural sciences. Each faculty recipient of support for developmental activities must be an "eligible participant" as defined in the definitions section of this RFA. Training of faculty and encouraging faculty to develop them in Leadership in Agriculture to serve as role models is encouraged.

NIFA requests the submission of proposals for coordinating the recruitment and development of faculty/student teams to participate in research activities at host research institutions and laboratories. The HSI applicant will administer the grant project in coordination with research staff at USDA and/or other agencies.

Applicants should also consider requesting up to \$25,000 to sponsor a well-defined training program for faculty at HSIs that would address one or all of the USDA Strategic Goals (see complete list in Part VIII, E. Definitions) with the purpose of building their capacity and fostering linkages with USDA agencies. Applicants requesting support for this training should attach a three-page project prospectus to their application. (See Part IV, B.3.f.). One institution will be funded to complete this leadership training. Funding for this activity is not renewable. This activity will be funded as a component of an HSI grant and not as a separate grant award. Please include this amount in the final budget.

(c) Instruction Delivery Systems.

The purpose of this strategy is to encourage the use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: incorporating alternative instructional methodologies that respond to differences in student learning styles; inter-institutional collaborating in such a manner to deliver instruction in ways that maximize program quality and reduce unnecessary duplication; and considering and implementing innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology. This includes the development of capacity for distance education in these particular areas in which institutions partner with one another to optimize resources in offering high quality distance educational opportunities.

(d) Scientific Instrumentation for Teaching.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide students in science-oriented courses the necessary experience with suitable, up-to-date equipment in order to involve them in work central to scientific understanding and progress. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: acquiring new, state-of-the-art instructional laboratory and other classroom equipment to help assure the achievement and maintenance of outstanding

food and agricultural sciences higher education programs; upgrading existing equipment; or replacing non-functional or clearly obsolete equipment.

(e) Student Experiential Learning.

The purpose of this strategy is to further the development of student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs outside the formal classroom that provide students with opportunities to solve complex problems in the context of real-world situations. Proposals may emphasize knowledge and applications that provide student graduates with skills desired by employees, but are not limited to: preparing future graduates to advance knowledge and technology, enhancing quality of life, conserving resources, and revitalizing the Nation's economic competitiveness; advancing student decision-making and communication skills; and improving real-life technological expertise. Applicants are encouraged to find a USDA agency, non-profit, and/or private sector organization to assist in the development of these student experiential learning activities.

(f) Student Recruitment and Retention (including student financial assistance).

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen **underrepresented** student recruitment and retention programs in order to promote and strengthen the Nation's scientific, professional, and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: supplementing efforts to attract increased numbers of outstanding academic students to prepare for careers as food and agricultural scientists, professionals, and technicians; promoting opportunities for underrepresented groups to engage in a robust exchange of ideas and a more effective use of the full breadth of the Nation's intellectual resources; or mentoring programs and other initiatives (including financial assistance) to attract and retain outstanding students.

Applicants may request funding (up to \$50,000) to provide financial assistance to one student beyond their participation in the project that will address the underrepresentation of Hispanics in professional careers in the food and agricultural system as well as the government. Include a budget with the expected expenses for this scholarship in the budget narrative. For example, a student completing a two-year degree could be sponsored to complete a four-year degree or a student completing a four-year degree could be sponsored to complete a master's degree. **Two-year colleges must have an articulation agreement allowing the student to complete a bachelor's or professional degree at the selected granting institution. Funds could cover tuition, books, stipend, computer, travel to one professional conference in their field of study, and/or travel to a one-week leadership training workshop.** The student stipend amount selected by the applicant should be comparable to the current stipend at the institution to be attended by the student. The student should be selected within the first 12 months of the award and encouraged to complete funded school work within 54 months of the initial award date (4 1/2 years). Include this student in the table requested in section B.

Each student recipient must be enrolled at an eligible institution and meet the requirement of an "eligible participant" as defined in the definitions section of this solicitation. The

table below can be used as a guide to determine and document the appropriate level of student stipend support.

Education Level: BS, MS, Ph.D.	Student Scholarship-Total Amount (\$)
Institution	Name/Department
Degree/Discipline	
Tuition	\$
Computer	\$
Stipend	\$
Travel to Professional Conference	\$
Expense X	\$
Expense Y	\$
Expense Z	\$

5. Disciplines and Subject Matter Areas Supported

Eligible institutions may, within the Educational Strategy targeted for support, propose projects in any discipline(s) or subject matter area(s) of the food and agricultural sciences as noted below:

General Food and Agricultural Sciences; Agribusiness Management and Marketing (includes Agricultural Economics); Agricultural/Biological Engineering; Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Agricultural Education, Agricultural Communications, and Rural Sociology); Animal Sciences; Aquaculture; Conservation and Renewable Energy and Natural Resources (includes Forestry and Ecology/Wetlands); Entomology, Animal; Entomology, Plant; Environmental Sciences/Management; Food Science/Technology and Manufacturing (including Food Safety); Human Nutrition; Human Sciences/Family and Consumer Sciences (excludes Human Nutrition); International Education/Research (enhancement of U.S. programs); Plant Sciences and Horticulture (including Turf Sciences); Related Biological Sciences (includes General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry, and Microbiology); Soil Sciences; Veterinary Medicine/Science; Water Science/Water Resources; (including Water Quality and Watershed Management); and "other" relevant and subject matter areas. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines that support the disciplines listed above are encouraged.

6. Levels of Study Supported

Applications must be directed to formal, for-credit academic programs at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels of study. Please include in your application a table similar to the one presented below to summarize the outreach of the project.

Number of Students Supported by Level of Study Supported					
Institutions Participating in the Project (1to X)	K through 12	Associate Arts/ Associate in Science	Bachelor's in Science	Masters' in Science	Doctoral Degree
Institution 1					
Institution 2					
Institution 3					
Institution 4					
Institution 5					
Institution 6					
Institution 7					

7. Project Scope and Institutional Collaboration

A proposed Regular or Collaboration project may: address a single Educational Strategy or multiple Educational Strategies; focus on the undergraduate or graduate levels of study; and focus on a single discipline or subject matter area or multiple disciplines or subject matter areas, in any combination.

Applicants may submit Regular Project proposals and/or Collaboration Project proposals. Applicants submitting Regular Project proposals may partner with one other eligible institution. (See Part II, C. Project Types.) Proposals should be designed to: (1) increase the pool of highly-qualified students from minority groups that are traditionally underrepresented in professional careers in the food and agricultural sciences and USDA's labor force; (2) make more scientific knowledge readily available to the Hispanic-Serving Institutions; (3) provide technical and financial assistance through grant and scholarship programs to recruit and retain talented students and faculty; and (4) provide support for utilizing and developing the professional faculty and staff as a source of expertise deemed important.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to collaborate with a **USDA agency**. USDA agencies are listed below:

Farm Service Agency (FSA); Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS); Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS); Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Rural Development Agency (RD); the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS); Economic Research Service (ERS); Forest Service (FS); Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA); Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS); Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS); Risk Management Agency (RMA); Agricultural Research Service (ARS); and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to leverage grant funds and/or contribute towards overall goals and objectives.

Examples of collaborative activities with USDA could include but are not limited to internships, USDA Career Days, Hispanic-Serving Institution student visits or tours, and USDA staff presentations to students and faculty.

The USDA Office of Human Capital Management has identified 20 Mission Critical Occupations (MCO's) in its FY 2008 Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program Plan. Using this information the HSI Education Grant Program will focus on the top fifteen occupations listed below by priority and ROCN track code, see page 22 for description:

1. Forestry Technician - CCFS
2. General Biological Scientists - BNSARS
3. Biological Science Technician - BNSARS
4. Soil Conservation Specialist - NRNR
5. Soil Conservation Technician - NRNR
6. Forestry Specialist - CCFS
7. Dietician and Nutritionist Specialist - FSFS
8. Consumer Safety Specialist - FSFS
9. Soil Science Specialist - NRNR
10. Veterinary Medical Officer - RDLF
11. General Business and Industry - RDLF
12. Statistician Specialist - SEARSLF
13. Consumer Safety Inspection - FSFS
14. Food Inspection Specialist - FSFS
15. Agricultural Commodity Grader - FSFS

8. Project Evaluation

In addition to measuring progress toward achieving the specific objectives of your funded project, your Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B.3.b.(B)(5)) must also include a strategy for assessing how your project advances the Five HSI Education Grants Program Goals (Part I, C.2). Please see Appendix A for a table that includes suggested potential indicators and units of measurement.

Examples. The following suggested evaluation examples are derived from the Department of Education's *Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007*, Federal STEM Goals and Metrics, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics.

To demonstrate progress toward increasing the number of graduates, the following metric is suggested: first, provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award showing the number and/or percentage of students who declare and/or complete a major program of study in the food and agricultural sciences within your unit; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data. List the expected number of students benefiting from this project and their level of education using information and data collection throughout the life of the project. A table is recommended.

To demonstrate progress toward increasing the quality of instruction, the following metric is suggested: first, provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award

showing the current number and/or percentage of graduates who either graduate and pursue a vocation in the food and agricultural sciences or who pursue advanced degrees within the food and agricultural sciences; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data.

Baseline Data. For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting HSI Education Grants Program Goals, applicants could reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/>, or other, similar source(s).

Logic Model. Applications for ALL projects must include the elements of a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative and formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project **before** writing your proposal. Two additional pages are allowed for this information. See Part IV.B3,b.B.6 for details on where to attach this information to your application. Additional resources to logic model planning and examples of logic models are available on our website:

http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html (Planning).

http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/education/in_focus/multicultural_if_hsi_conference_09.html (Examples).

Independent Evaluator. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Up to 8 percent of grant funds may be used for this purpose on Regular Projects and up to 5 percent on Collaboration Projects. Finally, all applicants should actively participate and fund a meta-evaluation and should plan to fund a project data collector as part of the evaluation project.

9. Project Director's Meetings and Dissemination Plan

As part of the award, you will be required to disseminate your findings and best practices and to attend two types of meetings throughout the duration of the grant.

Meetings. During the tenure of a grant, all Project Directors must attend a New Project Director's Meeting at the beginning and an **Annual Project Director's Meeting** for each award year. Meetings will be held in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. A reasonable amount of travel costs should be included in the budget. The purpose of the **New Project Director's Meeting** will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, and future directions for education reform. The **Annual National Project Director's Meetings** will provide opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results and network with other grantees. The proposed budget should reflect the attendance of these meetings.

Dissemination Plans. Applicants must include in the project's Dissemination Plan a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This should include the following: educational journals; professional discipline publications; a website; presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops; and the Annual HSI's Project Director's Conference.

Thus, NIFA's HSI Education Grants Program requires that applicants must address in their applications the following items discussed above:

1. Discuss how the project addresses at least one of the **NIFA Priority Areas** described above;
2. Discuss how the project addresses the **Program Goals** and describe how the proposed project will contribute to the overall goals of the HSI program (Part I, C);
3. Address how the project concentrates on the HSI's Education **Program Objectives** by increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas related to agriculture, natural resources, and environmental sciences;
4. Address at least one of the **Educational Strategies** (described in Part I, C.4.), and explain how this supports the program objectives and goals listed above;
5. Identify the **Discipline(s)** supported and how it relates to the NIFA Priority selected and the collaborating USDA agency;
6. Address the **Level of Work** supported. Include a table describing the expected number of students benefiting from this project and the level of education such as associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees at each of the institutions participating in the program;
7. Document how applicants will find and partner with a **sponsoring USDA** agency in order to leverage grant funds and/or contribute towards the proposed project overall goals and objectives; and
8. Include a strong **Evaluation** component that will assist you in documenting how project accomplishments (products, results, impacts, etc.) will be published or disseminated to the widest extent possible throughout the academic community. Applicants are encouraged to develop a project web page as part of their dissemination activities. Applicants are also encouraged to develop an on-campus review committee to evaluate their progress and termination reports. This measure will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. NIFA anticipates that approximately \$9.2 million will be available to fund applications in FY 2012. Approximately half of the funds will be used to fund Regular projects. This amount is anticipated to fund new and continuation projects. **This RFA will only fund new regular projects and ROCN projects. In FY2012, a separate RFA will fund only continuation projects.**

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2012, applications may be submitted to the HSI Program as one of the following two types of requests:

1. **New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the HSI Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.
2. **Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the HSI Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV, B.3.f.). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications. **Applications that do not address comments from previous reviewers will not be accepted or considered for funding.**
3. **Continuation application.** A continuation grant is an award for which an application is approved, but each year of funding is awarded on an annual basis and subject to the availability of annual appropriations and satisfactory progress of the project. **This type of application will be requested under a separate RFA.**

Important References

As you prepare your application, please refer to the following three references:

- In order to address the shortage of the agriculture workforce, particularly from underrepresented groups, a useful guide for applicants is the NRC report on the “*New Biology for the 21st Century*” (<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12764.html>).
- For supporting their proposal and improving their project, applicants are also strongly encouraged to refer to the recommendations for change from the National Academy of Science 2009 report entitled, *Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World*. This report recommends that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement the following nine steps to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society. These recommendations are:

- Implement Strategic Planning;
- Broaden Treatment of Agriculture in the Overall Curriculum;
- Broaden the Student Experience;
- Prepare Faculty to Teach Effectively;
- Reward Exemplary Teaching;
- Build Stronger Connections among Institutions;
- Start Early—K-12 Outreach;
- Build Strategic Partnerships; and
- Focus Reviews of Undergraduate Programs in Agriculture.

For information on the full report, please refer to http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml and click on recommendations.

- Also refer to a 2009 whitepaper on Human Capacity Development prepared by the Academic Programs Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. Copies of the whitepaper entitled “*Human Capacity Development The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS)*,” can be found at: <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639>.

C. Project Types

There are two types of project proposals: Regular; and Collaboration. The Collaboration will also be referred to as Regional or National Collaboration Network (ROCN). The Regional or National Collaboration Network projects will accept only new applications. Awards will be made based on funding available for FY 2012.

- **A Regular Project** is one in which the Hispanic-Serving Institution (college or university) applying or the HSI applicant and other Hispanic-Serving Institutions will be involved in the execution of the project. Approximately half of the funds available will be used to fund Regular projects.
- **A Collaboration Project** is one in which four or more Hispanic-Serving Institutions will build linkages to maximize the use of limited resources by generating a critical mass of expertise to address an activity focused on one of more targeted Educational Strategies. This will increase cost effectiveness, achieve economies of scale, strengthen the scope and quality of a project’s impact, and reach a larger number of institutions and students.
 - **NEW Collaboration Project Regional or National Collaboration Network (ROCN)** is a proposal for a project in which a group of **four** or more Hispanic-Serving Institutions form a cooperative arrangement for the purpose of carrying out common objective(s) on the group’s behalf in order to promote and strengthen their abilities to carry out higher education programs in the food and agricultural sciences, nutrition, and natural resources. These applications must include a meta-analysis component. New Collaboration Projects funds are only available to institutions not previously funded for a Regional or National Collaboration project (ROCN). Please remember to emphasize the project’s focus, scale, and impact. **Up**

to two new Collaboration Project will be funded, depending on funding available for FY 2012.

In summary, **Regular** applications for this program may be submitted by a single Hispanic-Serving Institution, a set of Hispanic-serving Institutions, or a Hispanic-Serving Institution as a lead working with other non-Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Again, the lead institution must be an HSI.

Collaboration Projects or Regional or National Collaboration Network (ROCN) projects involve at least four HSIs colleges or universities with one of them acting as the lead institution. In addition, they may also include non-HSIs institutions to the required minimum of HSIs. The Continuation Collaboration applications are limited to previously funded projects and the new collaborations are open to new groups of HSIs. The activities of these collaborative efforts must support and enhance educational equity.

1. Application Submission Limitations

For the FY 2012 program, an applicant may not submit as a lead institution more than four Regular applications and only one Collaboration application as the lead institution. New collaboration applications will only be accepted from new groups of Hispanic-Serving Institutions that are not currently leading a Collaboration project.

2. Project Duration

The statutory time limitation for this program is five (5) years. No project may be active for longer than five (5) years, including no-cost extensions.

For the FY 2012 program, eligible institutions may submit Regular or Collaboration Project applications as defined in this RFA.

All **Regular** projects will be fully funded for a duration of 24 to 36 months, and Collaboration projects will be funded for 12 to 24 months with the opportunity for funding renewal for funding for up to four years total:

New Collaboration Projects or Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN) will be funded for twelve months and up to \$900,000 with the opportunity for renewal at a similar level based on the availability of funds for this purpose and the project's previous year performance and/or efforts towards the accomplishment of specified timelines and outcomes.

3. Award Size

The award size varies by type of project as follows:

a. Regular Project

For the FY 2012 program, an applicant may request up to \$250,000 (total, not per year) for a Regular Project. Additional funds up to \$50,000 may be requested by the applicant to take

advantage of their position as an HSI to recruit and support one underrepresented student and address the severe underrepresentation of Hispanics in the Federal government. Therefore, the total or maximum for a regular grant award size is \$300,000, including indirect costs. Applicants must describe in the budget narrative how these funds will be allocated. Note that the funds requested do not have to be divided equally between institutions or among project years.

b. New Collaboration Project Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN)

Collaboration proposals will be funded up to \$900,000 per year for up to four years and will require the participation of four or more HSIs. Grantees will have the opportunity for renewal at a similar level based on the availability of funds and the project's previous year performance towards the accomplishment of specified timelines and outcomes.

A ROCN project should seek to bring together a multi-state, multi-institutional, and multi-disciplinary team of Hispanic-serving Institutions to develop and implement a Hispanic-serving initiative, a large-scale multifaceted intervention to recruit, retain, and graduate Hispanic students.

The intent of the ROCN project is to promote collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information, and the development of resources that accelerate education and placement of Hispanics into USDA or other Federal agencies addressing USDA priorities.

The ROCN project should aim to coordinate efforts and integrate activities among individuals, institutions, states, and regions. Therefore, applications should clearly articulate how a ROCN grant will complement and/or link with existing programs or projects to make a significant impact on the education of Hispanic students. Applicants could collaborate with existing non-profit organizations to recruit students and increase and enrich the pool of candidates interested in food and agricultural sciences, and natural resources.

Activities supported should better position the institution(s) involved to engage on its (their) role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and reach out to the current or potential underrepresented student population. Applicants must describe in the budget narrative how these funds will be allocated.

Up to two collaboration proposals are expected to be funded in FY 2012, depending on the availability of funds. Distribution of funds among collaboration members will be decided by the applicant organizations.

The Collaboration Project - NEW Regional or National Collaborations Networks (ROCN) applications require a Letter of Intent. No more than two letters of intent per institution will be accepted. In addition, only one letter of intent per institution per track, see page XX, will be accepted.

- Letters of intent (LOI) are due **January 10, 2012.**
Further instructions for preparing LOIs are given below.
- Letters of intent are limited to four pages:
 - Abstract with number of students to be served, including the academic level;
 - Personnel distribution and role;

- Administrative and Management Plan; and
 - Budget allocations (including collaborators).
- All partners receiving funding for students must be HSIs.
- Up to seven ROCN awards will be made in FY 2012 (up to 2 new awards and up to 5 continuation awards under a separate RFA).
- HSIs can only be the lead in one ROCN award, but they can collaborate on as many as four ROCN awards.
- Letters of Intent will be reviewed, and competitive LOIs will be invited to submit a full application.
- Invitation for full applications will be sent on or about 5:00 p.m. EST on January 15, 2012.
- Full Collaboration Project-Regional or National Collaboration Networks (ROCN) applications will be due March 8, 2012 by 5:00 p.m. EST.
- Applications must include summer programs for screening potential undergraduate or graduate students and enroll them in an agriculture related program that includes completion of a degree.
- Requested budget exceeding the budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.
- **Proposed NEW ROCN projects should:**
 - Develop human capital relevant to tracks listed earlier;
 - Train students for Associate, Baccalaureate or Master's degrees;
 - Synthesize and incorporate a wide range of the latest relevant research results;
 - Lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions;
 - Not exceed \$900,000 per year (\$3.6 million total, including indirect costs) for project periods of up to 4 years; and
 - Include a K-12 outreach and recruitment component.

NIFA anticipates making up to two awards in FY 2012. Funding for second, third and fourth year will depend on the availability of funds for this purpose and the performance of previous years.

- **NIFA's Expectations for New Collaboration Grantees:**
 - Fund and conduct recruitment activities to select students interested in agriculture;
 - Provide academic guidance and tutoring as required;
 - Track students and document student progress to show 90 percent retention until graduation;
 - Develop a set of activities that will enhance student academic experience;
 - Provide students the opportunity to engage in research with faculty;
 - Provide students the opportunity to attend a professional meeting;
 - Assist students to maintain academic good standing of a 3.0 GPA or higher with a minimum of 15 credit hours a semester;
 - Provide assigned Faculty (compensated) mentoring;
 - Engage students in community, Federal government, or non-profit volunteer or paid service;

- Collect student letter of commitment stating expectation for reimbursement if they do not fulfill the requirements of their program participation.
- Include in the application travel support for underrepresented students to attend conferences and make presentations;
- Negotiate summer paid internship off campus with USDA/affiliate agency each summer and document efforts and results;
- Encourage more effective partnerships and reduce duplication of efforts among participating academic institutions;
- Train qualified underrepresented students who are capable of entering the agricultural sciences workforce with occupational competencies expected by USDA;
- Fund at least fifty students per year, document student progress, and retain at least 90 percent of students until graduation;
- Leverage funding to maximize the number of students participating in the project;
- Document measurable impacts and target audiences;
- Develop a project website with information on the students funded;
- Coordinate student screening and recruitment activities with USDA collaborator;
- Work with USDA agency collaborator to identify qualifying requirements for targeted positions;
- Work with USDA to develop a plan for Summer Internship placement;
- Assist participating students to develop a resume;
- Hold USDA internship application workshops for students twice a year;
- Place at least 80 percent of the students in mission critical occupations at USDA or relevant agency;
- Design qualifications and/or placements of students' projects that lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group; and
- Ensure the project team will have appropriate training and experience in multiple disciplines including statistics and survey methodology.

Letters of Intent by January 10, 2012 for New Collaboration only:

Failure to follow the guidelines below may result in the Letter of Intent being removed from consideration.

1. The Letter of Intent must adhere to the following formatting guidelines:
 - Letters of intent are limited to four pages;
 - Abstract with number of students to be served, including the academic level;
 - Personnel distribution and role;
 - Administrative and Management Plan;
 - Budget allocations (including collaborators);
 - Font size must be at least 12 point;

- Margins must be at least one inch in all directions; and
 - Line spacing must not exceed six lines of text per vertical inch.
- a. On Page 1, provide only the following information:
 - i. Name, professional title, department, institution, and e-mail address of the lead project director (PD) and all collaborating investigators;
 - ii. Program Area Priority addressed by the project; and
 - iii. USDA collaborators.
 - b. On Page 2, include:
 - i. Descriptive title;
 - ii. Rationale;
 - iii. Overall goal;
 - iv. Specific objectives;
 - v. Approach;
 - vi. Potential impact and expected outcomes; and
 - vii. Number of underrepresented American students to be served.
 - c. On Page 3, include:
 - i. Proposed budget;
 - ii. Potential HSI collaborators;
 - iii. Funds to be distributed to collaborators; and
 - iv. Other collaborators.
 - d. On Page 4, include:
 - i. Administrative organization; and
 - ii. Personnel involved and roles.
2. NIFA will only accept Letters of Intent in the portable document format (PDF). Attach the PDF Letter of Intent to an email addressed to the following email:
- hsigrants@nifa.usda.gov
3. Please write in the email subject line:: *Letter of Intent [10.223 _ [PDs Last Name] _[TRACK CODE]*. Save the document with the same name.

Tracks for Collaboration Project-Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN)

	<u>TRACK CODE</u>
Climate Change and Forest Service Labor Force	(CCFS)
Sustainable Energy and Agricultural Research Service Labor Force	(SEARSLF)
Biological/Natural Sciences and Agricultural Research Service Labor Force	(BNSARS)
Food Safety and Food Safety and Inspection Service Labor Force	(FSFS)
Natural Resources and Natural Resources Conservation Service Labor Force	(NRNR)
Rural Development Labor Force	(RDLF)

4. Only one letter of intent per institution per track will be accepted.
5. An acknowledgement receipt will be sent within 5 business days by replying to the sender.
6. Letters of Intent will be reviewed by scientific program staff in order to plan for appropriate expertise for the peer review panel and ensure that the proposed project fits appropriately within the Program Area Priorities.
7. Within three weeks after the Letter of Intent deadline, the PD will receive a response from the agency.
8. Applications submitted without a prior Letter of Intent submission are discouraged.
9. Budget Periods. Regular and Collaborations applications must contain a budget for each budget period for the entire duration of the proposed project. Annual and cumulative budgets are required.
10. Subcontract Arrangements. If it will be necessary to enter into a formal subcontract agreement with another institution, financial arrangements must be detailed in the “R&R Sub-award Budget Attachment(s) Form.” Annual and cumulative budgets and a cumulative budget justification are required for each subcontract agreement. Refer to Part V, 8. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions on completing this form. A Letter of Commitment signed by the Authorized Representative of the subcontracting institution is also required.
11. Ability to document success of the program is essential. These projects should lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group. These projects should synthesize and incorporate a wide range of the latest relevant research results.

12. The applications for the HSI Education projects may include any or all of the following activities:

- classroom and laboratory instruction and practicum experience;
- cutting-edge agricultural science and technology curriculum development;
- innovative teaching methodologies;
- instructional materials development;
- education delivery systems;
- student experiential learning (student-led research);
- internships, externships, and/or clinics;
- student learning styles and student-centered instruction;
- student recruitment and retention efforts;
- career planning materials and counseling;
- pedagogy;
- development of modules for on-the-job training;
- providing knowledge and skills for professionals creating policy or transferring to the agriculture workforce; and
- student exchanges.

13. Program Area Code – 10.223

14. Deadlines:

Regular Project: Regular Application Deadline-- February 9, 2012, (5:00 p.m., ET).
No letter of intent required for Regular Applications.

Collaboration Project: Regional or National Collaboration (ROCN).
Collaboration Letter of Intent Deadline – January 10, 2012, (5:00 p.m., ET).
Collaboration Application Deadline – March 8, 2012, (5:00 p.m., ET).

- Requests exceeding the budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.
- Program Area Contact – Dr. Irma A. Lawrence (202)720-2082 or hsigrants@nifa.usda.gov

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Awards may only be made to public or other non-profit Hispanic-Serving Institutions as defined in the definitions section of this RFA. To be eligible for competitive consideration for an award under this program, a Hispanic-Serving Institution must at the time of application certify that it has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students. By submitting an application, the applicant organization certifies that it is eligible to receive funding under this program.

If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent organization. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by an authorized representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Both the fiscal agent organization and the applicant school or institution must submit complete organizational management information (see Part V, D.).

Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be a Hispanic-Serving Institution. (Submission of fiscal agent information (above) is not requested now, but will be required, before an award is made.)

1. Branch Institutions

For the purposes of this program, the individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions are treated as separate institutions eligible for awards. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education. Institutions also must be legally authorized to offer at least a two-year program of study creditable toward an associate's or bachelor's degree. Separate branches or campuses of a college or university that are not individually accredited as degree granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions.

2. Subcontracts

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Budget for subcontractors must be included with the corresponding budget narrative.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to **“Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
1. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on **“Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,”** enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-HSI-003624** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources

available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

1-800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov, to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is Dallas overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent submissions of an application will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on http://grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs.

1. SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. R&R Project/Performance Site/Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. List the **primary USDA Strategic Goal (from Part VIII, E., Definitions) addressed by this project**; the primary Educational Need Area (from Part I, C.1.); and the primary Discipline (from Part I, C.2.). Briefly summarize the project objectives and include all measurable project outcomes, including the number and type of beneficiaries, including the level A.A., B.S., M.S. or PhD, supported by the HSI program. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the HSI Program Goals.

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- **List the Project Title:**
- **Project Code: NJ**
- **List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation for each)**

- List your project's **Degree Level:** (i.e. associates of science, bachelors of science, masters of science, etc.)
- List your project's **Priority Need Area:**
- List your project's **Educational Strategy(s):**
- List your project's **primary Discipline/Subject Matter:** (the academic major where the project's primary focus will occur; e.g., forestry, animal sciences, food safety, human nutrition,...etc.) (see Part I, C.2.)
- **Partners:** If Collaboration Project, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate Subaward Budget Attachment). If not a Collaboration Project, enter: 'N.A.'
- **Total Funds Requested:** (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Collaboration Project, also list each partner's total funds requested next to the institution's name).
- **Summary Text -** Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary of your project to include:
 - **Purpose:** What is the major problem your project will address?
 - **Audience:** Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
 - **Number of students that will benefit from the project:** How many? Degree level?
 - **Products:** What will be produced?
 - **Outcome/Impact:** What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe as the primary benefits to your audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in your project's assessment/evaluation plan to demonstrate how you will assess whether or not these benefits were achieved (See explanation of terms in Part IV, B, 2.b.).
- Please include a Table of Content after the summary.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

The Project Narrative must not exceed 20 pages double-spaced of written text and up to a maximum of five additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (25 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers will not be required to review material in excess of this limit.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following: (Note: To facilitate proposal review and evaluation, include the following, underlined wording as headings in the Project Narrative, followed by the applicant's response for each item.)

(A) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:

Institutional Long-range Goals. Demonstrate how the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

Identification of Educational Problem(s) and Project Impact. Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address at least one of the Educational Strategies described in Part II, C.1. Briefly explain the project's anticipated, overall impact on improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education and how it will advance the goals of the HSI Education Grant Program.

Project Justification. Clearly state the specific instructional problem or opportunity to be addressed. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project will be of value at the State, regional, national, or international level(s). Describe any ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program. Innovation. Describe the proposal's creative approach to improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solving a higher education problem, or advancing educational equity. Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences education, or with other academic curricula. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for other institutions.

(B) Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

(1) Objectives. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished and how these align with the HSI Education Grant Program Objectives. Performance-based objectives are strongly recommended. The objectives section should include the following:

- Answers the question, "What should the project or participants be able to do?" Performance-based objectives should be used and they should guide the evaluation tools that will measure the successful completion of a project or activity.

You can use the ABCD method for creating a performance objective (Heinich, Molenda, Russell & Smaldino, 2002) to systematically think about writing appropriate performance objectives towards your project goals:

- **A is for audience-** who are the learners? Are they adult learners? Are they workshop participants? Are they young students? How many? At what level?
- **B is for behavior** - what learning is overt and observable?
- **C is for condition** - how? In what context or under what circumstances will learning occur? Will the audience be expected to know pieces of information to accomplish learning?
- **D is for degree** - how much will be accomplished? How well or to what level does this learning need to be perfected?

(2) Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.

(3) Timetable. Provide a timetable for conducting the project. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and close-out.

(4) Products, Results, and Measurable Outcomes. Explain the expected products and results, and their potential impact (outcome) on strengthening food and agricultural

sciences education in the United States. (Important Note: “Products” may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., “...developed three, new Web-based courses containing supplemental materials”; “Results” are intended or unintended consequences of the project, e.g., “...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours”; and “Outcomes/Impacts” are a measure of the results by comparing what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., “...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, web-based course materials”.) Quantify outputs and/or outcomes.

(5) Evaluation Plans. Provide a methodology and implementation plan for evaluating the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes during the project. Indicate the criteria, and corresponding weight of each, to be used in the evaluation process, describe any data to be collected and analyzed, and explain the methodology that will be used to determine the extent to which the needs underlying the project are met. Identify data to be used as baseline data. Demonstrate that the project’s impact on improving education will be evaluated. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project’s outcomes and impacts. Finally, all applicants should actively participate and fund a meta-evaluation.

(6) Logic Model. Applications for projects must include the elements of a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project before writing your proposal. Two additional pages are allowed for this information. See Part IV.B.2, f. for details on where to attach this information to your application. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html.

(7) Dissemination Plans. The proposal must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts...etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community, as well as, publishing a paper in a recognized journal showcasing the project outcomes. Discuss the institution’s commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication. Consider distributing materials to other Hispanic-Serving Institutions, especially HSI grantees. **Applicants are encouraged to develop a project web page within the first six months of the project as part of their dissemination activities. Also, applicants are strongly encouraged to publish project findings in a peer review or professional journal.** In addition, grantees are strongly encouraged to write and publish an article on a peer reviewed journal the project’s results and findings.

(C) Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:

(1) Institutional Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to the project and has the capability to ensure its

completion. Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period. For example, substantiate that the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or show how this project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

(2) Institutional Resources. Document that the necessary institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

(3) Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve and strengthen teaching at the institution (including any partner institutions). Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period.

(4) Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the end of the grant period, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

(D) Key Personnel:

Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process. Appropriate bilingual and bicultural personnel should be included to better serve and attract Hispanic students to the programs offered. Include a current and pending support form that lists time commitment in percentage for each key staff. You are encouraged to include personnel knowledgeable of the culture of underrepresented students expected to be found at a Hispanic-serving Institution.

(E) Budget and Cost-effectiveness:

In addition to providing detailed information as part of the Budget Justification, include the following information as part of the Project Narrative:

(1) Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff, travel, equipment, etc., are essential to achieving project objectives.

(2) Justify that the total budget will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

(3) Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Need Area, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

(4) Include the percentage of time key personnel will work on the project, both during the academic year and summer. The salaries of university personnel (i.e. their total compensation) must not exceed the faculty member's regular annual compensation. In addition, the total commitment of time devoted to the project, when combined with time for teaching and research duties, other sponsored agreements, and other employment obligations to the institution, must not exceed 100 percent of the normal workload for which the employee is compensated, in accordance with established university policies and applicable Federal cost principles.

(5) If the proposal addresses more than one Educational Need Area or Discipline (e.g., student experiential learning and instruction delivery systems), i.) state which one (primary) is most representative and list all the others in descending order of importance, and ii) estimate the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective Need Area or Discipline. **Make sure you explain how the primary Educational Strategy (or Discipline) supports one or more of the six current USDA Strategic Goals (see Definitions, Part VIII, E., for complete list).**

c. Bibliography & Cited References (Field 8. on the form) - **(Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)**

If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

d. Facilities & Other Resources (Field 9. on the form) - **(Optional Attachment - Must be PDF format)**

If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 11 below.

e. Equipment Documentation (Field 10. on the form) - **(Optional Attachment - Must be PDF format)**

Equipment purchased (defined as in excess of \$5,000 for each item) must be fully justified under this section. Other purchases (e.g., computers, laboratory materials, etc.) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the 'Materials and Supplies' line item.

f. Other Attachments (Field 11. on the form) - **(Must be PDF format)**

- **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.**

This requirement only applies to "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B., "Types of Applications". PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page**, titled, "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW." If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.

- **Development Training – PDF Attachment.** Applicants who wish to support development training for current faculty or administration at Hispanic-Serving Institutions should send a three-page project prospectus attachment that would address one or all of the USDA Strategic Goals with the purpose of building capacity at Hispanic-Serving Institutions and fostering their linkages with USDA agencies.

- **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit.** If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

Logic Model – PDF Attachment. For ALL Projects. 2-Page Limit.

- **Results from Prior HSI support – PDF Attachment. 1-Page Limit per Award.** If the PD or a Co-PD has received HSI support in the past five years, information on results from that prior funding period is required. This information will be used in the review of the application. For each award, list the NIFA award number, the amount and period of support, the title of the project, a summary of the progress or results of the completed work, the long-term effects of these results, and the publications resulting from the award.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. Remember to attach the required Biographical Sketch for at least the Project Director, as well as any additional individual who will receive Federal support from this project.

Also, **you must attach ‘Current and Pending Support’** information (see NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide p. 31 & 32, item 5.3, for guidelines and information format) for each senior/key person identified above. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the ‘Active’ section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the ‘Pending’ section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above. The total time commitment for both active and pending projects cannot exceed 100 percent.**

5. R&R Personal Data

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. If you choose to submit this optional form, please **DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.**

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project’s outcomes and impacts. Up to 8 percent of regular projects grant funds may be used for this purpose and up to 5 percent of collaboration project funds.

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors must attend a New Project Director’s meeting and annual meeting, held in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. Applicants should submit a budget request for Project Director to travel and attend these meetings. Also, Regular projects should request support for three students to travel and attend national meetings recommended by the agency. Collaboration Project: Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN) should request to support ten students to travel and attend national meetings recommended by the agency.

Budget Justification (Field K on the Form)

It is highly recommended that you provide justification for funding up to three students to participate at an annual conference to establish a sense of community for themselves, as well as, potential networking opportunities. Collaboration Project: Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN) should request to support ten students to travel and attend national meetings recommended by the agency.

For Regular project applications with two institutions and Collaboration Project applications, indicate how funds will be distributed to the participating institutions. Please remember that collaboration projects cannot keep more than sixty-one percent of the award funds. Use the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment and attach as a separate file to indicate the names of the participating institutions with the amount(s) to be disbursed among them.

Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget and budget justification for the entire project. If your project involves partners

with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Collaboration Project: ROCN), make sure the attachment reflects information:

- (a) for the applicant institution as well as each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative column total for the entire project, and
- (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Collaboration Project). Please note, Federal funds to be provided to collaborating institutions or subawards should be included in the budget line under "Other Direct Costs" Subcontracts.
- (c) Please note that all budgets, total, per year, and subcontracts, require a budget narrative.

The Budget Justification should follow a standard spreadsheet format ('Budget Line Item' = row; 'Budget Year' and 'Cumulative Project' = columns) including a detailed, itemized breakdown of each of the line item categories reported on the R&R Budget form. Please refer to the "[Budgetary Details](#)".

7. R&R Subaward Budget Attachment (Only required if submitting a Collaboration Project Proposal or if project includes subcontracting to any other organization)

8. Supplemental Information Form

- a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying. Enter the program code name, 'Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grants Program' and the program code, "NJ".
- b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See Part VI, 1.6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Regular applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **February 9, 2012**, (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

b. New Collaboration Projects Regional or National Collaboration Network (ROCN) must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **March 8, 2012** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Please remember that New Collaboration projects require a letter of intent due **January 10, 2012**.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF 424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the Authorized Representative has not received a confirmation message from NIFA within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII

of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

1. Award Limitations

For FY 2012, a lead institution may receive up to two awards, Regular and Collaboration (ROCN). Institutions could serve as participants on an unlimited number of regular applications.

Institutions will only be awarded up to one Collaboration or ROCN award, but they could serve as collaborators in a ROCN award in up to four awards.

2. Funding Limitations

Please see Part II, C.3., Award Size, for maximum budget requests for regular or collaboration project applications. For FY 2012, there is no limitation on the amount of funding a single awardee may receive either as a lead institution, a cooperating institution, a subawardee or any combination thereof.

3. Use of Funds for Facilities

Under the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program, the use of grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed. With prior approval, in accordance with the cost principles set forth in OMB Circular No. A-21, some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations, or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are incidental to the major purpose for which a grant is issued.

4. Indirect Costs

Section 720 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Regular applications application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

New Collaboration Project Regional or National Collaborations (ROCN) application will be evaluated in a 3-part process. First, applicants will be requested to send a Letter of Intent. These letters of Intent will be reviewed and screened. The stronger Letters of Intent will be invited to send a full application. Secondly, each full application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Finally, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA.

Regular project applications will move directly to panels once the initial screening confirms these meet all the administrative requirements.

1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem (30 points).

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, USDA's Goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).

This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. Key Personnel (15 points).

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and dissemination of these findings.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority Educational Strategies.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 215—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110).

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225 – Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224)), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3021— USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3430—CSREES procedures to implement Competitive and Noncompetitive Nonformula Grant Programs—General Grant Administrative Provisions and Program.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

1. Project Directors Conferences

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors must attend a New Project Director's meeting. Project Director's are also required to attend a yearly National Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The purpose of the New Project Director's meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, and future directions for education reform. The Annual National Project Director's meeting will build on the New Project Director's meeting and will also provide opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results.

2. Annual Performance Report

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project and annually thereafter during the life of the grant (see #4 below). Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Applicants are also encouraged to develop an on-campus review committee to evaluate their progress and termination reports. This measure will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports.

New Regional or National Collaboration Network (ROCN) awards are expected to participate in a meta-analysis. Finally, all applicants should actively include, participate and fund a meta-evaluation as part of their project plans.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the project (see #4 below). The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the project director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award and should include an independent evaluation and appropriate documentation of the

project's outcomes and impacts. Up to 8 percent of grant funds may be used for this purpose in Regular projects and up to 5 percent in Regional or National Collaboration Projects. Applicants are also encouraged to develop an on-campus review committee to evaluate their progress and termination reports. This measure will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports. Finally, grantees are expected to track the students served.

Grantees are strongly encouraged to write and publish an article on the project's results and findings on a peer reviewed journal.

4. Current Research Information System (CRIS) Reports

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting HSI Education Grants Program Goals, applicants could reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/>, or other, similar source(s).

5. Other Reports

Grantees should be aware that NIFA may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with NIFA personnel, or persons retained by NIFA, in evaluating the institutional context and the impact of any supported project. Grantees may be asked to provide general information on any students and faculty supported, in whole or in part, by a grant awarded under this program; information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to, standardized academic achievement test scores, grade point average, academic standing, career patterns, age, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and disability.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Irma A. Lawrence; National Program Leader; Division of Community and Education; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; STOP 2251; Washington, DC 20250-2251; telephone: (202) 720-2082; fax: (202) 720-4924; e-mail: ilawrence@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant Project Director after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

Educational and general expenditures means the total amount expended by an institution for instruction, research, public service, academic support (including library expenditures), student services, institutional support, scholarships and fellowships, operation and maintenance expenditures for the physical plant, and any mandatory transfers that the institution is required to pay by law.

Educational Strategies means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the solicitation for applications and addressed by the applicant's proposal. Educational Strategies are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Strategies are targeted for funding support in the request for applications.

Eligible institution means an institution of higher education:

- (1) that has an enrollment of needy students as defined in this section;
- (2) except if waived by the Secretary of Education, the average educational and general expenditures of which are low, per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, in comparison with the average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent undergraduate student of institutions that offer similar instruction;
- (3) that is legally authorized to provide, and provides within the State, an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree; or that is a junior or community college as defined in this section;

- (4) that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or that is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation;
- (5) that meets such other requirements as the Secretary of Education may prescribe; and
- (6) that is located in a State.

The term eligible institution also applies to any branch of any institution of higher education, described by the definition of an eligible institution, that by itself satisfies the requirements contained in clauses (1) and (2) of the definition of an eligible institution.

For purposes of determining whether an institution is an eligible institution, the factor described under clause (1) of the definition of an eligible institution shall be given twice the weight of the factor described under clause (2) of the definition of an eligible institution.

Eligible participant means an individual who: (1) Is a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this section; or (2) Is a citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau. Where eligibility is claimed on the basis of owing permanent allegiance to the United States, documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to USDA upon request.

Full-time equivalent students means the sum of the number of students enrolled full time at an institution, plus the full-time equivalent of the number of students enrolled part time (determined on the basis of the quotient of the sum of the credit hours of all part-time students divided by 12) at such institution.

Hispanic-Serving Institution means an institution of higher education that:

- (1) is an eligible institution as defined in this section; and
- (2) at the time of application, has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students.

Institution of higher education means an educational institution in any State that:

- (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing a secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate;
- (2) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;
- (3) provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree;
- (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and
- (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted preaccreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education for the granting of preaccreditation status, and the Secretary of Education has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution

will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Junior or community college means an institution of higher education that:

- (1) admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which the institution is located and who have the ability to benefit from the training offered by the institution;
- (2) does not provide an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree (or an equivalent degree); and
- (3) provides an educational program of not less than 2 years in duration that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; or offers a 2-year program in engineering, mathematics, or the physical or biological sciences, designed to prepare a student to work as a technician or at the semiprofessional level in engineering, scientific, or other technological fields requiring the understanding and application of basic engineering, scientific, or mathematical principles of knowledge.

Nonprofit as applied to a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution means a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Plan of Work means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's objectives. At a minimum, the Plan of Work should include a time line of major activities to be undertaken, descriptions of protocols and procedures to be followed, an explanation of how resources will be acquired and used, and an outline of the qualifications and responsibilities of all key project personnel.

Regular project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) where the applicant institution will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution and one other entity, but where the involvement of the other entity does not meet the requirements for a Collaboration Project proposal as defined in this section.